

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-11 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

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USIA-06 OMB-01 SAM-01 SCCT-01 /083 W

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0071

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 0932

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, XF, IS, US

SUBJECT: ISRAELI COMMENTATORS FOCUS ON THE JORDANIAN OPTION

REF: STATE 027375

BEGIN SUMMARY: ISRAELI MEDIA PORTRAY EXPLORATIONS OF PROSPECTS FOR JORDANIAN/ISRAELI NEGOTIATIONS AS LIKELY FOCUS OF DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY IN MONTHS AHEAD. WASHINGTON-BASED REPORTS SUGGEST THAT JORDANIAN OPTION WAS MAJOR TOPIC OF RABIN/FORD CONSULTATIONS, WHILE HUSSEIN'S DECISION TO RECONVENE JORDANIAN PARLIAMENT IS READ HERE AS SIGN OF HIS RETURN TO NEGOTIATING ARENA. LOCAL COMMENTATORS NOTE THAT JORDANIAN/ISRAELI NEGOTIATIONS WOULD GENERATE STRONG OPPOSITION FROM ISRAELI HARDLINERS. RECALLING FAILURE OF 1974 EFFORT, THEY  
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EXPRESS CONSIDERABLE SKEPTICISM THAT HUSSEIN COULD PROVIDE

SUFFICIENT POLITICAL COMPENSATION TO PERMIT RABIN GOVERNMENT TO AGREE TO MAJOR WITHDRAWALS. SITUATION IS COMPLICATED BY GOI COMMITMENT TO GO TO ELECTORATE IN CASE AGREEMENT IS REACHED INVOLVING WEST BANK WITHDRAWALS. END SUMMARY

1. UPON EVE OF RABIN'S RETURN TO ISRAEL, MAJOR THEME EMERGING IN ISRAELI MEDIA IS REPORTED U.S./ISRAELI INTENTION TO EXPLORE POSSIBILITY OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH JORDAN. FOCUS ON JORDANIAN OPTION APPARENTLY BEGAN WITH BACKGROUNDERS FROM MEMBER OF RABIN'S PARTY TO ISRAELI PRESS CORPS, RECEIVED FURTHER EMPHASIS IN FRONTPAGE GWERTZMAN ARTICLE IN FEBRUARY 4 INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE, AND HAS NOW BEEN PICKED UP BY LOCAL COMMENTATORS.

2. IN ANALYZING MIDDLE EAST NEGOTIATING PROSPECTS, THESE COMMENTATORS HAVE USED DEDUCTIVE REASONING TO ARRIVE AT JORDANIAN OPTION BY PROCESS OF ELIMINATION OF OTHER POSSIBILITIES. THEY NOTE THAT GENEVA CONFERENCE APPEARS BLOCKED DUE TO DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ISRAELI/U.S. AND SOVIET/SYRIAN VIEWS REGARDING PLO PARTICIPATION. SYRIAN INTRANSIGENCE AND INSISTENCE ON ADDRESSING THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE APPEAR TO FORECLOSE NEGOTIATIONS REGARDING THE GOLAN HEIGHTS, ALTHOUGH REPORTS OF SYRIAN OVERTURES TO WALDHEIM THROUGH PLO REPRESENTATIVE KADDOUMI HAVE OPENED CRACK IN THE DOOR. AT SAME TIME HUSSEIN'S DECISION TO RECONVENE JORDANIAN PARLIAMENT AFTER 15 MONTH HIATUS IS BEING INTERPRETED HERE AS INDICATION THAT HE IS REAFFIRMING HIS LINKS WITH WEST BANK AND REESTABLISHING HIS PLACE AS ACTIVE NEGOTIATING PARTNER. HUSSEIN IS BELIEVED TO HAVE COORDINATED THIS STEP WITH SAUDIS AND SYRIANS WHO HAVE GIVEN HIM GREEN LIGHT TO SIDESTEP RABAT DECISION.

3. SADAT'S ASSERTION IN LEBANESE NEWSPAPER INTERVIEW THAT SECRETARY HAD ASSURED HIM OF "MORE THAN RECOGNITION FOR THE PLO" HAS ALSO BEEN CITED AS AN ARGUMENT FOR JORDANIAN OPTION. ISRAELI COMMENTATORS, WITHOUT BEING ABLE TO CONFIRM ACCURACY OF SADAT'S STATEMENT, BELIEVE THAT IT UNDERSCORES OPEN-ENDED NATURE OF U.S. POSITION ON PALESTINIAN QUESTION WHICH IS ALSO SEEN FROM CONDITIONAL PHRASEOLOGY OF USG PUBLIC STATEMENTS ON DEALING

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WITH PLO IN FUTURE, THESE COMMENTATORS ARGUE, IT SHOULD MAKE EFFORTS NOW TO PROMOTE SETTLEMENT WITH JORDAN WHICH WOULD ALSO ENCOMPASS SELF-DETERMINATION FOR THE PALESTINIANS.

4. SEVERAL VARIATIONS FOR EXPLORING JORDANIAN OPTION HAVE BEEN NOTED. ISRAELI RADIO POLITICAL ANALYST THIS MORNING HIGHLIGHTED POSSIBILITY OF RE-EXAMINING EITHER JERICHO PLAN OR FUNCTIONAL DISENGAGEMENT APPROACH INVOLVING FURTHER

EXTENSION OF JORDANIAN ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITY IN WEST BANK SOME LABOR ALIGNMENT POLITICIANS BELIEVE THAT ISRAEL SHOULD GO FOR OVERALL SETTLEMENT.

5. ISRAELI POLITICIANS AND COMMENTATORS VIEW PROSPECTS OF ACTUALLY ATTAINING JORDANIAN/ISRAELI AGREEMENT WITH CONSIDERABLE SKEPTICISM. THEY RECALL FAILURE OF EFFORT IN THIS DIRECTION IN SUMMER OF 1974. REFLECTING A WIDELY-HELD VIEW, ONE PROMINENT LABOR PARTY PERSONALITY TOLD US THIS WEEK THAT ISRAEL WOULD BE ABLE TO MAKE SIGNIFICANT TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS ON THE WEST BANK ONLY IF HUSSEIN WERE PREPARED TO ENTER INTO A FINAL PEACE AGREEMENT. ISRAELIS, HE NOTED, BELIEVE THAT THE U.S. AND NOT EGYPT COMPENSATED ISRAEL FOR WITHDRAWALS IN SINAI AND THEY ARE NOT PREPARED TO REPEAT THIS PROCESS AGAIN ON WEST BANK. COMMENTATORS ALSO HAVE NOTED THAT EXPLORATION OF JORDANIAN OPTION WOULD BRING TO SURFACE DEEP DIVISIONS WITHIN LAB OR ALIGNMENT AND THAT BROAD ANTI-WITHDRAWAL FRONT WOULD CRYSTALLIZE EARLY ON TO TRY TO BLOCK ANY SUCH NEGOTIATING EFFORT. SINCE GOVERNMENT IS COMMITTED TO GO TO ELECTORATE IN CASE AGREEMENT WERE TO BE REACHED WITH JORDAN INVOLVING WEST BANK WITHDRAWALS, JORDANIAN OPTION COULD MEAN EARLY ELECTION. ALL THESE CONSIDERATIONS, LOCAL OBSERVERS MAINTAIN, WILL LEAD RABIN TO PROCEED CAUTIOUSLY AND TO DEMAND HIGHLY VISIBLE AND TANGIBLE POLITICAL CONCESSIONS FROM HUSSEIN. WHETHER HUSSEIN WOULD BE READY OR ABLE TO MAKE SUCH CONCESSIONS IS REGARDED HERE AS HIGHLY PROBLEMATIC.

6. AS REGARDS NEXT STEPS, ISRAELI COMMENTATORS BELIEVE THAT RABIN HAS ATTAINED BRIEF RESPITE OF SIX TO EIGHT WEEKS DURING WHICH U.S. EXPECTS ISRAEL TO FORMULATE A "GENEROUS OFFER" TO HUSSEIN. HUSSEIN'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON IN MARCH IS SEEN AS PROVIDING OPPORTUNITY FOR U.S. TO SIZE UP PROSPECTS FOR PROCEEDING FURTHER WITH JORDANIAN OPTION. IN SUM, IT IS CONFIDENTIAL

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GENERALLY FORESEEN THAT THERE WILL BE CONSIDERABLE DIPLOMATIC MOVEMENT IN MONTHS AHEAD INVOLVING NEW PRESSURES ON RABIN GOVERNMENT AND CONSIDERABLE MANEUVERING ON DOMESTIC POLITICAL CHESSBOARD.

7. COMMENT: IT IS STRIKING THAT BEFORE RABIN WAS EVEN ON THE GROUND, AND WITHOUT ANY "HARD NEWS" OF THE VISIT TO GO BY, COMMENTATORS WERE BUSY WRINGING OUT THE JORDANIAN OPTION--AND GENERALLY FINDING IT WANTING. THE AMOUNT OF PRESS SPACE AND AIR TIME DEVOTED TO THIS SOMEWHAT FOOTLESS EXERCISE IS YET ANOTHER INDICATION OF THE TRUTH OF THE SECRETARY'S COMMENT IN LOS ANGELES THAT ISRAEL IS A COUNTRY OF "THREE MILLION PEOPLE AND SIX MILLION OPINIONS\*" DUNNIGAN

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